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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a brief history of the work of Maria Montessori and traces the development of the Montessori method in English education. The first woman medical student in Italy, she developed an interest in the needs of mentally handicapped children. Contrary to the accepted view, she came to the conclusion that mentally 'deficient' children required mainly an educational, or 'pedagogical,' rather than a medical treatment. The Montessori movement in England reached its zenith in 1921 and declined due to a division within the ranks of its supporters. However, the influence of Montessori's methods continued to exist and expand, particularly in the private sector of education. Montessori's two principal biographers, Standing and Kramer, missed the significance of the fact that Montessori was a woman in medicine in Italy during a period when women all over Europe were struggling to be admitted into the public sphere. Other researchers have addressed the significance of this factor in the educational field among her contemporaries. Montessori's claims to scientificity and their articulation with an increasingly rationalized education system explain, in part at least, her success. (EH)

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'Individual work': Montessori and English Education Policy 1909-1939

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Introduction

Maria Montessori was born in Italy in 1870 to middle class parents. (Standing 1957:3). As a pupil she was interested in mathematics and for a while she intended to follow a career in engineering. This she eventually rejected and chose instead to gain a qualification in medicine. In pursuit of this end she became the first woman medical student in Italy. After graduating, she worked at the Psychiatric Clinic in the University of Rome where she developed an interest in the needs of mentally handicapped, or as she termed them, 'idiot' children (Montessori 1912:31). Contrary to the accepted view she came to the conclusion that mentally 'deficient' children required mainly an educational, or 'pedagogical', rather than a medical treatment. This line of reasoning was strengthened by her study of the work of the French doctors, Itard and Séguin who were early pioneers in the study and treatment of the mentally handicapped (Boyd 1914).

Her lectures on the 'education of the feeble minded' led to the establishment of the State Orthophrenic School which Montessori directed for two years. This work involved the training of teachers as well as teaching herself. During her time at the State Orthophrenic School she concluded that the methods she had used, 'had in them nothing peculiarly limited to the instruction of idiots' and that 'similar methods applied to normal children would develop or set free their personality in a marvellous and surprising way' (Montessori 1912:33) . The methods included the development of didactic material and experiments that led to an 'original method for the teaching of reading'. After leaving the school Montessori followed university courses in experimental psychology and conducted research on what she termed, Pedagogic Anthropology in elementary schools. This led to her appointment as Professor of Pedagogical Anthropology in the University of Rome in 1904. Two years later she was invited to undertake the organisation of infant schools for children aged three to seven in the model

tenements of the Roman Association for Good Building. The first of these Casa dei Bambini was opened in 1907 and others soon followed. In these 'Children's Houses', Montessori conducted pedagogical experiments, 'in the education of young children, with methods already used with deficients'(Montessori 1912: 45). These included the pedagogical apparatus which was used for sense training and which, according to Montessori, made possible, 'the method of *observation* and *liberty* '. By observation, Montessori meant that teachers should observe children in order to know what their spontaneous activity was (Montessori 1912: 109) and by liberty she meant self-discipline (Montessori 1912: 87). Thus children worked not collectively but by themselves not under the direction of the teacher but under the discipline and direction of the pedagogic material, a practice Montessori described as 'auto-education' (Montessori 1912: 371).

This is a necessarily brief and partial sketch of the historical Montessori and of her 'method'. What is most striking perhaps about this period of her life, and also of her work during this time, is her absolute commitment to the ideals of those eighteenth century, French and Scottish thinkers who are grouped together under the label of the Enlightenment. That is adherence to the view that scientific understanding of the human and physical worlds can be used to regulate human interaction (Callinicos 1989:32) and that reason is the basis of human progress. It is perhaps not coincidental that Itard, the author of the treatise on the Wild Boy of Aveyron and one of the central figures in Montessori's intellectual genealogy, was himself a quintessentially Enlightenment figure. Montessori described his account of his attempts to train the 'Wild Boy' as an attempt 'to snatch a man from primitive nature'. Like Freud, she held that civil life and civilisation were 'made by the renunciation of nature' and that the logical antithesis of the 'savage' was the rational, autonomous human being. It is this belief that underlies her claim that in the Children's Houses :

> the triumph of discipline through the conquest of liberty and independence marks the foundation of the progress which the future will see in the matter of pedagogical methods. To me it offers the greatest hope for human redemption through education (Montessori 1912: 374)

Underlying this stress on discipline or, more accurately because Montessori criticised those who attempted to enforce discipline from without, self-discipline, was an anxiety shared with many others of her class at the time, about the potential for disorder among those who lived in what she described as 'homes of misery and blackest poverty' where 'evil passions are kindled that lead to [...] crime and bloodshed' (Montessori 1912: 48-53).

The Career of Montessorianism

I want now to provide an account of the career of Montessorianism in England prior to discussing how it might be explained. Montessorianism flashed across the Edwardian, English, educational sky like some incandescent comet that faded very quickly until only a glow remained as evidence of its ever being present. That 'glow' consisted mainly of a small number of schools where her method was followed to the letter, a larger number of schools that had been in some way transformed by the adoption of some of her principles, a few faithful supporters and the status of an educational expert for Montessori herself. This expert status was both a cause and an effect of the power and extent of her discourse on young children's education. With respect to the 'movement' that condensed around her presence and her method, there is little doubt that the reason why it imploded, as it did, until only a core of devotees remained was Montessori's apparent need to retain absolute control of anything that was done in her name and her refusal to permit her method to be altered or adapted in any way (Kramer 1968; Cohen 1974).

The work of Maria Montessori was first brought to the attention of English audiences in an article written for the Journal of Education in 1909 (May 1909). This article predates the first mention of Montessori in print in the United States by a few months (Chattin-McNichols 1992). In the next few years reports and discussion of Montessori's methods filled the educational press. Unlike the Froebelians to whom official approval was a long time coming, Montessori received a fervent endorsement in an official publication within three years of the first article on her work appearing in England. The author of the report for the Board of Education was E. G. A. Holmes, formerly Chief Inspector of Elementary Schools. Holmes however was no ordinary inspector. He described himself as a 'neo-Froebelian', and he was a Buddhist who was sympathetic to Theosophy (Gordon 1983). After his retirement he became a prominent critic of the state education system (Holmes 1911). While he may not have been entirely typical of HMI he was perhaps typical of the Anglo-Irish landed class from whence he came. He shared with many of that class a profound distaste for the regimentation and routinisation that he saw in the public elementary schools, the state schools provided for the children of the labouring poor.

Holmes' account of the Montessori method was based upon a visit he made to the Casa dei Bambini in 1911. He became active in the formation of the Montessori Society of the United Kingdom in 1912, along with his friend, Bertram Hawker, who with his wife had founded, in 1908, the Kindergarten Union of South Australia. They also established a Kindergarten in Adelaide. After visiting Montessori in Rome Hawker returned to England and opened the first Montessori school in England in a room in his house at East Runton in Norfolk. Around twelve pupils chosen from the local elementary school attended and they were taught by Evelyn Lydbetter who was one of the first teachers in England to take Montessori's training course (TES 5 Nov. 1912).

The movement in England began to grow rapidly and in the following year, at a conference organised for teachers by England's largest local authority, the

London County Council (LCC), four papers were given on aspects of Montessori's method. Local education authorities at the time had a relatively large degree of discretion with regard to whether or not they supported particular methods such as Montessori's. Finance was their principal constraint but supporters of policies aimed at improvement in education could often get a hearing at local level when at national level, policy makers were deaf to their urgings. At the conference, the Chair of the LCC Education Committee indicated that his authority had 'taken every means to post itself up in this interesting subject' (Cobb 1913). The LCC further demonstrated its interest by sending an infant school teacher to Rome to attend Montessori's international training course in 1913. On her return the teacher, Lily Hutchinson, began a Montessori class at her school (Kramer 1968: 242).

In 1913 the Montessori method began to dominate the educational press. The journal Child Study, for example, which was begun by the Child-Study Society in 1908 and up until then had largely carried articles on a wide range of educational innovations, in 1913 published several articles and many reports on meetings held to discuss Montessori. The attendance at these meetings was extraordinarily large, such was the interest created by the reports of the 'miracles' '(Holmes 1923:94) performed by Montessori at the Casa dei Bambini. Eight hundred people gathered in London for example to hear the Directrice du Groupe Francais "Montessori", Mme Pujolis-Segalas, speak. These and other indications show that by 1913 Montessori and her method had become a fad, as contemporaries described it, in educational circles.

In 1914 the Montessori Society held a conference at East Runton. This attracted a wide range of educational reformers not all of whom, however, were sympathetic to Montessori. The Times Education Supplement's account of the conference reported that:

> The Society felt that to a great extent its pioneer work was done and there was a suggestion that it should now develop into a larger and

> wider organisation, embracing Montessori and other kindred movements. Before the Conference was over this idea took shape in the form of a resolution - "That the Earl of Lytton and Mr. Hawker be asked to form themselves into a committee with power to co-opt with the object of repeating the conference, and that a circular be issued with a view of bringing together not only representatives of the Montessori Movement, but of all kindred movements, and that in such a form as will lead to its being a permanent means of their uniting for the advancement of educational thought in this country." (TES 4th August 1914)

The resolution was passed but this attempt to unite with kindred movements was entirely contrary to the direction that Montessori wanted the movement to take. She had to have absolute control over the uses made of her method and so only teachers trained by her were allowed to use her name and even then those teachers were not allowed to train others. Similarly, organisations utilising her name had to restrict themselves to propaganda on behalf of Montessori and no one else and thus the Montessori Society's Committee split and disbanded. The 'kindred' movements were gathered under the banner of the Conference of New Ideals which was closely associated with E. G. A. Holmes (Holmes 1931) In January 1915 the Times Educational Supplement carried the news that a new Montessori Society had been formed and that, 'the new President is Madame Montessori herself, and it is the aim of the new executive to "co-operate in anything she may undertake in this country"' (TES 5 January 1915) A London study circle was organised by Claude Claremont. He had been trained by Montessori in 1913 and acted as her interpreter in 1914 when next she held her training course. C. A. Bang, an employee of Montessori's English publisher William Heinemann, became the official organizer of the Society (Kramer 1968: 244). Like Claremont he was a devoted follower of Montessori who sought to protect the orthodox position that she had formulated. The Society's secretary

was Belle Rennie, a manager of a Church of England school at Sway in Hampshire where the Montessori Method with full equipment and apparatus was introduced in May 1913 (Kimmins 1915).

The First World War produced a temporary lull in the intensifying interest in and debate around Montessori's method. Because of the war she was unable to visit England until it had ended. In 1919 the year of her first visit as an educational celebrity, she arranged for a training course under her direction to be held in London. Two thousand applied from whom two hundred and fifty students were selected (Kimmins 1915: 254). As a result of all the publicity, the Montessori Society in London grew to over a thousand members. A headquarters was established in Tavistock Square, an area of London which became functionally specialised as several educational organisations were later to be based there, and branches were set up in other towns. Montessori's visit was composed of a hectic round of lectures, meetings and receptions the most celebrated of which was one chaired by the President of the Board of Education. Her extensive tour ended in 1920 but it was announced that she would return to give another training course in 1921.

This was to be the zenith of the Montessori movement in England for, following a meeting of the Montessori Society in September 1921, the Montessori movement suffered a damaging split. The act that precipitated the split was a speech by Dr Kimmins, Chief Inspector of Education Department of the LCC 1904-23. In it, he argued that teachers should be given scope to adapt methods and that if the divergence stemming from the adaptation became too great, then the name of the founder of the method should be omitted from its description. In effect this was a plea for a movement of a wider scope than just Montessori's method.

Montessori responded by withdrawing her name from the Society and resigning as its President. This left two groups of which the larger evolved into the 'Auto-Education Allies' and later into the Dalton Association. This latter movement, in

which Dr Kimmins was prominent, promoted the Dalton plan devised by Helen Parkhurst who had formerly collaborated closely with Montessori in the United States. from the mid 1920s onwards (Kramer 1968: 295), the movement associated with the Dalton Plan in England virtually eclipsed all that remained of the Montessori movement. a small group containing Bang and Hutchinson. Montessori. herself. was still active and continued to hold training courses in England. The educational press continued to report her activities and evidence supportive of the Montessori method was given by the Auto-Educational Institute (PRO ED10/84) to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education when it considered the primary school for its report of 1931(Board of Education 1931). While not a part of the formal apparatus of educational policy making. the Consultative Committee was very powerful in that it was able to make recommendations. It lacked, however, any executive power and thus many of its recommendations remained just recommendations.

As befitted an educationist who had written primarily about infant education, Montessori and her method were prominent in the next enquiry mounted by the Consultative Committee. This resulted in the publication of its report on the infant and nursery school in 1933. (Board of Education 1933). Montessori. in the words of the reporter for the Times Educational Supplement. 'attended in person a session of the committee to explain her method of child-training and demonstrated. with the aid of her assistants, the use of her educational apparatus' (TES 2 December 1933). Although the movement had declined she was still close to the centre of debate on the education of infants and the report bracketed her name with that of Froebel when it discussed influences on the English infant school.

Institutionalisation in schools

Reference has already been made to some of the schools that adopted the Montessori method. A full account of the extent of its institutionalisation is not possible here but as Cohen observed, 'the list of progressive schools using the

Montessori Method in the 'twenties reads like a *Who's Who* of English progressive education' (Cohen 1974: 57). However, as HMI found when a panel of inspectors was formed to consider the position of the Montessori system in England and its influence on English schools in 1928, it was faced with 'two difficult questions'. These were, 'what is the orthodox Montessori System and what constitutes a Montessori school?' (PRO ED 10/149). The working definition of a Montessori school that was eventually adopted by the HMI was one in which

> the orthodox use of some of the Montessori Apparatus notably that devised for sense training was a fundamental but not necessarily exclusive part of the training (PRO ED 10/149)

HMI concluded that few schools, judged on this criteria were Montessorian. On the other hand, they noted that the influence of her system had been 'very considerable' in the impetus it had given to 'well planned, reasoned, individual work in the three Rs' (PRO ED 10/149).

For the most part it was individual schools, particularly in the private sector that implemented Montessori's method in a way that was close to her intentions. An exception to this were the public elementary schools in the small London Borough of Acton. There in 1916, it was teachers who introduced the method into their schools and later, in 1923, when he was appointed as Secretary to the Acton Education Committee, Dr Smart, who became chair of the Montessori Society, gave it the backing of the local education authority (Harper Smith and Harper Smith 1989). Nonetheless, Acton was very much an exception among local education authorities and the more general view was represented by Miss E. Loveday, HMI who told the Consultative Committee that, 'the adoption by English elementary schools of Montessori principles was frankly impossible' (PRO ED 10/149). Her argument was that the necessary conditions for the adoption of the Montessori method simply did not exist to any degree.

On the basis of evidence similar to this, and the trajectory of the Montessori movement, Cohen was able to adjudge the Montessori movement in England, an 'adoptive failure'. This he defined as the rejection of an innovation by, 'the 'target system' due to deficiencies in the management of the reform, or incongruence with existing target system norms and procedure' (Cohen 1974: 51). With this evaluation there can be little dispute but instead of posing the question in terms of why the innovation did not succeed it might be more interesting to ask why it succeeded to the extent that it did.

Montessorianism as a social movement

In order to answer that, I want to consider briefly the nature of social movements such as the one considered in this paper. Social movements have been defined by Simons as, 'non-institutionalised collectivities that promote or resist social change from the bottom up'. Later in the same article he revised this definition so that it became wider in scope and it now referred to 'struggles on behalf of a cause by groups whose core organizations, modes of action, and/or guiding ideas are not fully legitimated by the larger society'(Simons 1991). Either of these definitions may be applied without doing too much violence to the evidence of the Montessori movement in England or to other comparable educational movements like the Froebel Movement. But unlike the Froebel movement in England which, as I have argued elsewhere, might be seen as an ideology advancing the interests of middle class women (Brehony 1992), the Montessori movement was too evanescent to sustain an ideology that advanced the material interests of those within it. However, the view of ideology as promoting or defending interests is not by any means the only version of ideology, as Eagleton, among many others, demonstrates (Eagleton 1991). Neither is it regarded as an exhaustive or totalising explanation. Other explanations may also be constructed, though they may not necessarily be as powerful. In the case of the career of Montessorianism in England, it might be

considered not as a social movement sufficient unto itself but as another professional social movement that was strongly articulated to the women's movement. Feminism

Both of Montessori's principal biographers, Standing and Kramer (Standing 1957) (Kramer 1968), missed the significance of the fact that Montessori was a woman. Neither of them addressed the question of what it meant to be a woman in medicine in Italy during a period when women all over Europe were struggling to be admitted into the public sphere: the sphere of paid work and politics hitherto the province of men. As Burstyn has pointed out, these accounts also miss the fact that Montessori's choices were made for her by a male establishment and that her 'routes for self expression were dictated by the fact that she was a woman' (Burstyn 1979) Not all the significance of her gender, however, was missed by some of her contemporaries. Henry Holmes, Professor of Education at Harvard, for example, alluded to Montessori's achievement as a woman in his 'introduction' to the American edition of her book, 'The Montessori Method'. Holmes' construction of femininity was traditional, all 'womanly sympathy and intuition' but he did call her work 'remarkable' as there was no other example of an 'educational system' that had been 'worked out and inaugurated by the feminine mind and hand' (Montessori 1912: xvii). W. H. Kilpatrick, the American progressive educationist, also made the point that Montessori's achievement was doubly remarkable as not only had she broken with tradition in education but she was also a woman (Kilpatrick 1915). Edward P. Culverwell, Professor of Education at the University of Dublin, placed her in a pantheon consisting of Pestalozzi and Froebel but without noting the gender difference and yet the very act of naming her alongside the 'great men' of education, in itself, highlighted her achievement as a woman (Radice nd) 1. Indeed, such was its magnitude that T. Percy Nunn, the educationist, apostle of individuality, paid her the compliment, as no doubt he saw it, of describing her logic as 'masculine' (Radice nd: 8)

It is perhaps something of an over-statement to describe Montessori as a feminist as Burstyn has done (Burstyn 1979) or as someone, 'active in the women's rights movement' (Cohen 1968). While there is warrant for both of these claims, much hinges on how 'feminist' and 'active' are defined. Undoubtedly, however these terms are construed, Montessori should be seen as part of the women's movement. In her book, 'The Montessori Method' there are a number of hints that she accepted the separate spheres argument and its concomitant notion, spiritual motherhood (Allen 1982). When speaking of the expected affects of the 'communising' of the 'maternal function' in the Case dei Bambini Montessori spoke of the 'new woman' who would come forth like a butterfly from its chrysalis and 'be liberated from all of those attributes which once made her desirable to man only as a source of the material blessings of existence'. This 'new woman' would be 'like man, an individual, a free human being, a social worker...' (Montessori 1912). The notion of women as mothers to society, as carers and social workers is caught in her discussion of the role of the directress of the Children's Houses. She is constructed as, 'a cultured and educated person' who is also 'a true missionary, a moral queen among the people', an 'almost savage people', to whom she dedicates her time and her life as well as living among them. This conception of women's role was perfectly congruent with the views of many women in the settlement movement and also of the Froebelian women who established free kindergartens in England. Montessori's discussion of the kind of person who would make a good directress underlines the fact that it was principally women who, to use the Althusserian phrase, were interpellated by her discourse (Eagleton 1991: 142-143). In America, Montessori's loyal supporters were almost exclusively women but in England many of her English followers were men (Kramer 1968:241). Of the original twenty eight members of the Montessori Committee, fourteen were men (Radice nd: 162). Men, mainly from the 'academy', the newly established University Departments of Education were also prominent in the public

discussion of the Montessori method (Culverwell 1913; Grant 1913; Boyd 1914). While at the height of enthusiasm for Montessori, meetings were typically addressed by men such as Holmes or Kimmins, the large audience, as at a meeting in London in 1913 at the Caxton Hall was, 'composed almost entirely of Ladies' (TES 4 March 1914). Nevertheless, unfavourable contrasts were frequently drawn with the Montessori movement in America where, as a speaker at a Montessori Society meeting reported, 'women played a much larger part in American education than in England' and that 'Women were more ready to take up new ideas than men' (TES 7th December 1915).

Some things, however, exhibited similarities to what was happening in the United States. As Reese has shown (Reese 1986), women's groups and Socialist organisations were frequently involved there in pressing for innovation in education. In England, Sylvia Pankhurst, who was later to be criticised by Lenin for being too revolutionary, became a supporter of Montessori. At the commencement of the First World War in 1914, the militant suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst started a number of initiatives designed to alleviate the social and material deprivation of women and infants in the East End of London. One of these was the turning of a disused public house, the Gunmakers' Arms into a clinic, day nursery and Montessori school.(Pankhurst 1977). The significance of this is not that it demonstrates a necessary relationship between socialist feminists and Montessori but that given the existence of Margaret McMillan's nursery school and the Froebelian 'free kindergartens', each conducting similar work among the children of the poor and their mothers, it would have been reasonable to expect that they, rather than Montessori would have provided a model.

Working with the children of the East End, Sylvia Pankhurst became concerned at their destructiveness. Referring to their treatment of the nursery toys she wrote that the toddlers had learnt only one game, 'to pound and break, to tear and destroy' (Pankhurst 1987:425). Noticing in a newspaper that Muriel

Matters had returned from studying under Montessori in Barcelona Sylvia Pankhurst immediately contacted her with a view to her organising a Montessori class. Matters was a militant suffragette and a member of the Womens' Freedom League. A balloonist she distributed leaflets over the Mall in the heart of London from a dirigible in January 1908 on the occasion of the opening of Parliament (Fulford 1957:173). In October 1908 she, along with two other women, had chained herself to the brass grille in the Ladies' Gallery of the House of Commons, behind which, women were discreetly hidden from the Members of Parliament. Shouting 'Votes for Women' she and her fellow fighters for women's' suffrage, was carried out attached to the grille which had to be removed (Fulford 1957:191). (Pankhurst 1977:293-294). In 1909 she again dropped leaflets over London from a balloon painted 'Votes for Women' arguing that a proposed petition to the Prime Minister on women's' suffrage was constitutional (Fulford 1957: 199). During the Dublin lockout of 1913, Matters, like the socialist ally of Jane Addams, Dora Montefiore, who later became a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, became involved in helping the children of the workers led by Larkin and Connolly (Pankhurst 1987)425 (Greaves 1972:319-321); (Levenson 1973:235-236); (Larkin 1965). In Dublin Matters had tried unsuccessfully to find a Montessori teacher and later decided to be trained herself.

Sylvia Pankhurst described the transformation that took place after the Montessori method had been introduced in language typical of the true believers. She wrote that, 'in some brief days the children had been completely won. Now with what grave delight they handled the apparatus, swept and dusted their room, washed hands and faces, changed bibs and pinafores, waited on each other at meals' (Pankhurst 1987:426). The language here is familiar but it is evident that not only were the practices of Montessori adopted at the Mothers' Arms but also some of her metaphors. When Pankhurst spoke of building an 'oasis' in the 'vast misery' of the slums (Pankhurst 1987:426), she used the same

term as did Montessori in describing the Casa dei Bambini where, according to her, there had, 'sprung up amid the terror and the suffering, oases of happiness of cleanliness and peace'(Montessori 1912:48).

Like most specific historical phenomena the explanation of Pankhurst's choice of Montessori rather than the others was that it was purely contingent but that a general relation existed between the women's' movement and the socialist movement on the one hand, and innovative educationists, such as followed Montessori and other leaders of the New Education movement (Selleck 1968)., on the other. It would be straining the evidence too far to suggest more than this or that the career of the Montessori movement was reducible to that of the women's movement.

Conditions: relations with Froebelians.

The early success of Montessorianism in England is even more remarkable considering the ideological conditions it encountered on its arrival. The New Education was highly pluralist but when Montessorianism arrived in England the ground of what we today call early childhood education was firmly occupied by the followers of Froebel who had not only secured an organizational base in teacher training institutions and a number of schools and kindergartens but had also received in the form of official discourse, the approval if not the enthusiastic endorsement of the state educational apparatus. Froebelians also held the high ground in the educational journals and also in the books published on the education of young children. This was a position they felt was threatened by the arrival of Montessori and as soon as the lineaments of Montessori's method were grasped by the Froebelians polemical skirmishes, typical of political and religious sects, began to take place.

Revisionist Froebelians, influenced by Dewey and G. Stanley Hall were confident that either Montessori offered nothing new or that she was wrong. This was the approach adopted by the prominent revisionists, Elizabeth Riach Murray and Henrietta Brown Smith. For them, she was wrong to lay so much

stress on her didactic apparatus and wrong to have neglected the study of play (Murray and Brown Smith 1920). These errors they attributed to the fact that Montessori's first observations were of 'deficient children' and they concluded that Froebel even in 1840 'had a far wider and a deeper realisation of the needs of the child than has yet been attained by the Dottoressa'(Murray and Brown Smith 1920:16). Alice Woods, a veteran Froebelian and campaigner for co-education (Brehony 1984), also highlighted the different approaches of Froebelians to imaginative play and fairy tales and thought that there was a serious danger that a fetish would be made of the Montessorian apparatus in the same way as there had previously been of the Froebelian 'occupations'(Woods 1920:58).

The Froebelians were not Montessori's only critics in the New Education movement. A. S. Neill, whose school Summerhill became synonymous with progressive education and who was closer to Freud than to Froebel, also claimed that he could see, 'Montessorianism becoming a dead, apparatus-ridden system' (Neill 1921) Margaret McMillan who, before she founded her own nursery school, had been an active member of the Froebel Society, rejected any comparison with Montessori despite their common study of Séguin stating, 'my educational system and hers are entirely different'(Lowndes 1960:33). Apart from the not inconsiderable matter of Montessori's method being a rival to her own, McMillan, in line with the Froebelians already cited, laid great stress on the role of imagination in education.

In spite of the criticism there was no gainsaying the initial popularity of Montessorianism. As Alice Woods admitted,

> there is no doubt whatever that Montessorianism has taken hold of our teachers and educational leaders in a way that Froebelianism never did....(Woods 1920: 45).

Woods, resisting mono-causal explanations put forward four reasons for the rise of Montessorianism One of these was her medical and scientific background,

another her 'marvellous' personality and the final two were the fact that the Froebelians had prepared the ground for the reception of her ideas and that Montessori had a very practical mind when it came to teaching (Woods 1920). The first of Woods' explanations will be returned to later. Of the other three, only the claim about the Froebelians having prepared the ground carries much weight. In one sense, as a Froebelian, Woods was bound to claim credit for the movement she had served for so long. It is also the case that some of the language used by Froebelians was not essentially different from that of Montessorians. Interest in the language and texts of social movements as a means of explaining their careers is relatively new and so I shall now look at some of these approaches that might assist the task of explanation.

Policies, texts and social movements

Montessorianism, can be regarded as little different to any other policy initiative in education that originates outside the state policy making apparatus. The reference to 'individual work' in the title of this paper signals just one of several ways that the policy was received in England between 1909 and 1939. Crucially, policies are interpreted by those who adopt and implement them which was, as has been seen what Montessori tried hard to prevent. Interpretation is, of course, the province of textual exegesis and hermeneutics. Recently, Bowe, Ball and Gold (Bowe, Ball et al. 1992) have argued in somewhat 'textualist' (Callinicos 1989:68) fashion, that educational policies may indeed be regarded as texts and thus analysed in ways similar to those used by structuralist and post-structuralist theorists. Proclaiming the death of the author, structuralist writers like Roland Barthes have challenged many of the authorial notions that historians of education often work with. As Clifford discussing Barthes puts it, 'the ability of a text to make sense in a coherent way depends less on the willed intentions of an originating author than on the creative activity of a reader' (Clifford 1988) The principal object of criticism here is the conscious,

intentional subject that structuralism sought in the 1960s to displace from its dominant position in French philosophy (Merquior 1986: 2-6). Even the reader is devoid of autonomy for whether the meaning of a reading is appropriated in a relatively straightforward way or it is the result of some considerable effort, is dependent upon the nature of the text. Whether it is, in Barthes' distinction, 'readerly' or 'writerly' (Merquior 1986: 141-142). Reading in this perspective remains, nonetheless, an intentional practice whereas in some versions of 'textualism' texts produce subject positions and hence subjectivity (Moores 1993).

Another approach to texts, but this time specifically historical texts, has been proposed by the historian of ideas and political philosophies, Quentin Skinner. His work is linked firmly to the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy represented by philosophers such as Wittgenstein and it has specific connections with speech act theory which was developed by the philosophers, Austin, Searle and Grice (Tully 1988). At the risk of doing some violence to Skinner's position by over-simplification, it may be said to rest principally on the intentionality claim. This asserts that in order to understand the meaning of a text it is necessary to recover the intended force of the author's utterance, or the point of what they were saying. Nevertheless, the first step for Skinner in the analysis of a text is the understanding of its locutionary meaning, the sense and reference of the terms used. This is done by situating the text in its linguistic or ideological context which is composed mainly, as Eco observed in his novel, The Name of the Rose, of other texts. For Skinner, the meaning of a text is not given by its social, political and economic context neither is it to be grasped solely through the study of the text alone as the 'textualists' argue. Thus he argues, that the understanding of texts 'presupposes the grasp both of what they were intended to mean and how this meaning was intended to be taken' (Skinner 1988). While the author is not exactly dead in Skinner's work, discourse comes to occupy the space inhabited by the author in more traditional approaches.

Nonetheless, it should be clear that Skinner and the structuralist and post-structuralist, 'textualists' are some distance apart in their respective approaches to texts.

A further approach of a 'textualist' nature that might prove fruitful in explaining the Montessori movement is that which looks at the way groups seek to persuade others of the validity of their claims. Rhetoric, or the study of persuasion originated with the ancient Greeks and in particular, with Aristotle (Aristotle 1991). In more recent times, Simons, whose work in connection with social movements was mentioned earlier, has focused on the rhetorics or forms of persuasion that social movements adopt. In doing so he distinguishes between rhetoric, the style, organisation and delivery of ideas and the ideas themselves (Simons 1991). An example might illustrate the point. Within the broad New Education movement it was a common strategy to denigrate existing educational arrangements before introducing a preferred solution in the form of a method. Montessori was no exception and in a famous passage she characterises some unspecified schools as places.

> where the children are repressed in the spontaneous expression of their personality till they are almost like dead beings. In such a school the children like butterflies mounted on pins, are fastened each to his place, the desk, spreading the useless wings of barren and meaningless knowledge which they have acquired (Montessori 1912: 14)

Numerous examples of this form of rhetoric abound not only in her writing but in that of her supporters too. The function of this form of persuasion is well captured by Merquior who observes that, 'intellectual trends often seem to achieve their own identity by dint of a strategy of blunt refusal - the strident negation of previous conceptual moulds' (Merquior 1986:2) . The Montessorians, it might be argued from this perspective, gained an understanding of who they were by defining who they were not. Further study

of their rhetorics should reveal more about how Montessorians perceived themselves and how they constructed their identities.

Scientism.

One of the central questions that this paper is attempting to raise is how did Montessori, a woman in not just a male dominated world but one in which men were actively and publicly hostile to women seeking access to the public sphere, achieve what she did? There is no one single answer, no one cause or condition that might yield a key but discourse theory offers one possibly useful line of explanation.

For Foucault, discourses are governed by systems of exclusion and inclusion. They are rule bound and the rights of individuals to participate in them are limited (Dant 1991:127-129). Consequently, the power to utter is unevenly distributed. Nowhere was this more obvious than in England in the early Twentieth Century when gender both facilitated and constrained utterance. How then did Montessori manage not only to speak but to be heard at official levels? What gave her, almost alone of women in education, the power to utter at the level that she did? Skinner's work involving as it does the interpretation of texts, the surveyance of ideological formations and change and the analysis of the relation between ideology and action, offers one way of providing an answer (Tully 1988). Space precludes a full exposition of Montessorianism along these lines but the first step may be taken. This involves the situation of a text in its linguistic and ideological context. The term used by Skinner for this is 'convention'. By this he means things that unite a number of texts such as their shared vocabulary, principles, assumptions and such like.

In Montessorianism one them stands out above all others that at the same time unites it with other texts and distinguishes it from others. That theme or motif I call scientism. It was a consistent and coherent claim in her work that what she was doing was scientific and that this was what distinguished her method from that of others. Examples of this claim are legion but it was not simply a claim as

there was also a practice that involved apparatus which was used for training but also for measurement. Children in the Casa dei Bambini were measured literally by use of a pædometer. This apparatus, Montessori claimed, represented, 'the scientific part of the method, because it has reference to the anthropological and psychological study made of children' (Montessori 1920:17).

Furthermore, although contested (Fynne 1924) her claim to scientificity was congruent with similar claims in other texts. In other words she entered an emergent discourse of education as a science and shared its vocabulary and its assumptions. This was recognised by many of her contemporaries. As the Froebelian Raymont observed,

> her outlook is essentially that of the scientific physician, and she has made a great contribution to that scientific attitude towards education which is characteristic of our time (Raymont 1937:331)

Montessori constructed herself through her training, through the genealogy she publicised and through the texts as one who was qualified to utter the discourse of the science of education when education, institutionalised in the academy, sought to transform the, 'lessons we may have learnt empirically in the past' and give them 'a scientific basis....' (Woods 1920) Holmes was even more specific in that he did not simply oppose science to empiricism but proposed a positivist notion that indexed medicine as a model which was captured in the observation that,

> the science, or pseudo-science, of pædagogy stands to-day where medical science stood before the germ theory of disease had established itself as sound theory (Holmes 1914:42) .

It was this that did much to give her the knowledge power to ascend to prominence so rapidly and so extensively once her claims had been made known.

It would perhaps be remiss if another important aspect of her scientificity were not mentioned and that is the way it was articulated with her religiosity. This

aspect of Montessori's texts and their relation to the career of her movement is no doubt very significant, a fact that was recognised by Cohen (Cohen 1969) in his study of Montessori as a priestess.

Individual work.

Another important 'convention' present in Montessori's texts is that referring to individual work. This articulated with a powerful critique of class teaching that had begun in the late Nineteenth Century, much of it articulated by teachers who were unable to reconcile the demands of the Elementary School Code and the examination system with excedingly large classes.

In addition, in the English context there is certainly much evidence from the early part of this century that the processes of the bureaucratisation and massification of the education system were strongly resisted (Brehony 1994) Against these tendencies, like the arrival of a liberal democratic state with which they were associated and which was relatively late in England, was counterposed a form of individualism which, in school terms, was often translated into an opposition to whole class teaching. It also translated into, to use G. Stanley Hall's term, 'paidocentricism' an ideology which placed the individual child at the centre of the processes of schooling. (Adams 1928:14-15) . The *locus classicus* of this view was Percy Nunn's, Education: Its Data and First Principles . In it Nunn said of Montessori that her 'cardinal' feature was, 'her courageous and resolute attempt to throw upon the child as completely as possible the responsibility for his(sic) own education' (Nunn 1926). The point being that teachers taught classes but individuals taught themselves.

In this instance 'convention' is in danger of slipping into condition as not only was individual work being discussed in texts (Mackinder 1923) but an active process of normalisation through the technologies of mental testing were taking place which resulted in the construction of the individual child as a site for invention as opposed to the undifferentiated class. Montessori's work could

therefore be interpreted to legitimate mental testing and was indeed appropriated by mental testers like Ballard who argued that,

> whatever may be the defects of her system it is quite certain that the movement towards individualism has received its greatest impetus and its greatest inspiration from Dr. Montessori (Ballard 1925:195)

Ballard opposed to class teaching not on philosophical grounds like Nunn but because he felt that were no such things as homogeneous classes and pupils should be grouped by measured ability. Convention approaches condition because the mental testing movement could be seen as a condition that advantaged pedagogical methods and systems that promoted the individual. Alternatively, the link between them was much less secure and Montessori's emphasis on the individual may be seen simply as one of a number of discursive elements that qualified her to utter.

Conclusion

The reception in England accorded to Montessori and her work from 1909 onwards was so enthusiastic at both the official level and among educationalists that it soon eclipsed the Froebelians who at that point dominated the field of early childhood education. Entertained by the President of the Board of Education and invited to give evidence before the Board's, Consultative Committee Montessori and her method soon attained a position of some importance with regard to policies directed at the education of young children in state elementary schools. By the mid 1920s, however, the Montessorian tide was ebbing and only in private schools did her method survive.

Unlike the Froebel movement the Montessorians were unable to make the transition from an educational sect to a stable movement. Much of this was due to the attitude of Montessori to those who tried to broadcast her ideas and practices. While important, the social composition of the group that followed her could never wholly account for the career of Montessori's method. An adequate explanation must take account not only of Montessorianism as an

ideology serving certain interests, the conditions into which that ideology was inserted but also of aspects of the texts themselves, the aspects that have been emphasised here. Specifically, I have argued that her claims to scientificity and their articulation with an increasingly rationalised education system explain, in part at least, her success. Montessori's stress on individuality also caught the anti-collectivist wave that arose as a reaction to what was seen as the Hegelian roots of German imperialism during the First World War. In addition, 'readers' of Montessori saw in her method the promise of the Enlightenment: a solution to problems of educability. When that promise failed the Montessori method soon became seen as a set of apparatus created by a rather authoritarian personality.

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